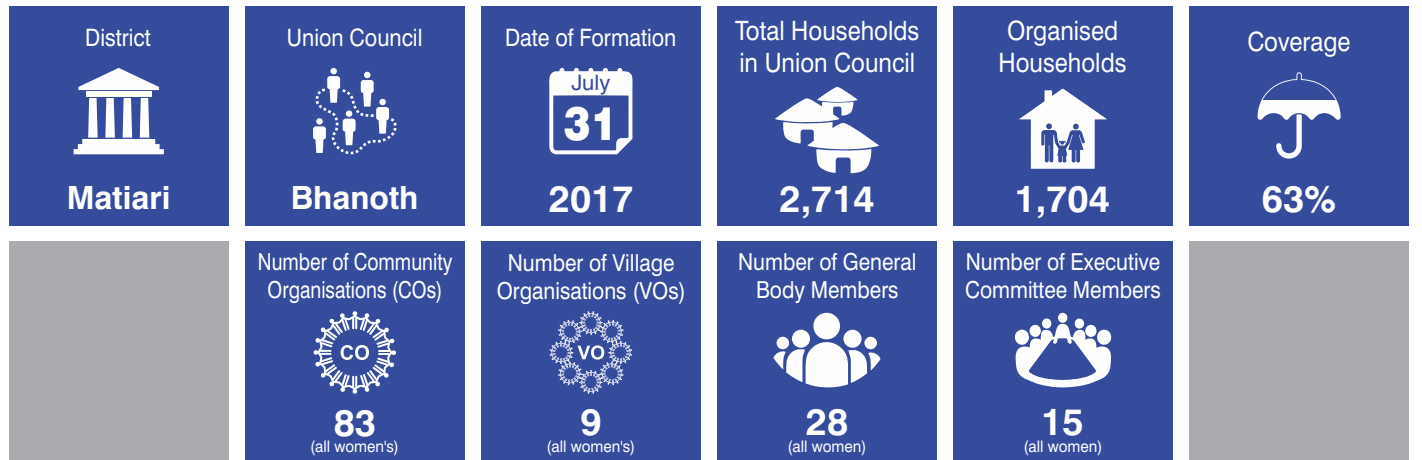


What are LSOs?

LSOs or Local Support Organisations are central to the 'Social Mobilisation' approach of the Rural Support Programmes (RSPs). In a bid to reduce poverty and empower marginalised people (especially women), the RSPs under SUCCESS, mobilise rural women into a three-tiered structure, which consists of Community Organisations (COs) - neighbourhood level community groups, Village Organisations (VOs) - village level federations of COs, and LSOs - union council level federations of VOs. LSOs are able to carry out community-led development at a much greater level due to the advantage they gain from numbers. As the tertiary tier, LSOs are also uniquely able to develop linkages with government and non-government organisations, donor agencies and the private sector.

LSO Initiatives

LSO Bhanoth, Matiari



(LSO Profile as of March 2018)

LSO Bhanoth formed on July 2017, represents a total of 1,704 organised households from the district of Matiari. Women leaders of LSO Bhanoth are planning and executing development activities including among others organising left out families in COs, constructing a link road through internal resources and restructuring School Management Committees in collaboration with the Government officials. The EU funded SUCCESS programme is empowering rural women in Sindh through realising the power they gain from collective action. The organised women now are gaining awareness about their rights, making the service providers accountable and are also taking self-initiatives to improve their lives.

Bringing the Left-out Households into Organised Fold

A number of poor households in the LSO area, union council Bhanoth, migrate to seek seasonal labour in other areas, especially at the time of harvesting wheat and rice. In fact, these households migrate out of their villages with their entire family members. So at the time of the formation of COs in the UC under the SUCCESS Programme, a number of such families were out of their homes on seasonal migration, therefore, they could not participate in the



Women Leaders of LSO meeting in their office

social mobilisation activities in the UC and were unable to join the CO in their settlements. Later on when these families came back to their homes, the LSO leaders decided to organise them so that they can also join others in improving their socio-economic conditions under the SUCCESS Programme. The LSO leaders first identified all such households with the help of their concerned VOs and conducted a series of dialogues and motivated them to get



themselves organised into COs and join the LSO. When these families showed their willingness to be a part of the programme and get organised, the LSO asked the concerned CRP to hold a proper programme introduction session with them and help them form their COs. As such, 54 such families have been organised in three COs. Dialogues are in process to form six more COs. The LSO leaders also learnt that there were five COs that had not yet joined their VOs mainly due to social conflicts. The LSO leaders met with them, resolved their issues and helped them join their VOs.

Revamping of School Management Committees

It is recognized that where parents and local communities are involved in school activities student achievement improves. Therefore, the School Management Committees (SMCs) in Sindh have a parent representation. The SMCs comprise of five members elected for the period of two years, including a Chairperson, which is a parent, a General Secretary, which is a Head Teacher, three members, two of whom are notables and one is a parent. The funds are released to SMCs of the public schools at different rates depending on the level of the school. The Primary Schools get a fund of Rs 22,000, while Middle Schools get Rs. 50,000, and Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools get Rs. 100,000. The funds are used for school maintenance such as paying utility bills, using the money for school building repairs and for buying stationary and/or furniture for the school. The responsibilities of SMCs include, among others, to monitor the teachers' attendance, increase the enrolment of children, and increase awareness amongst parents on the importance of education for their children.

After formation of the LSO under the EU funded SUCCESS Programme, the women leaders discussed the dismal situation of the schools and education in their UC of Bhanoth. They rightly concluded that one of the main reasons for this is the fact that most of the SMCs of their UC are not formed properly hence they are not functioning well due to control by influentials who do not hold interest in school management and misuse the funds. The Chairman of the SMC must be a parent whose child is currently studying in the school, but in UC Bhanoth, most of the Chairmen were local land-lords whose children were studying in expensive private schools in main cities. The women leaders brought this issue in the notice of the Assistant Commissioner (AC) at the time of the Taluka Joint Development Committee (JDC) meeting and told him that unless the SMCs are functioning properly, the education issues will remain unresolved forever. The AC had to take immediate actions against the complaint as it was raised by the women leaders in such a notable forum. Since the management of education has been devolved at the District level in Sindh, the AC used his power and decided to dissolve all former SMCs of the UC and re-constitute them properly. He also ordered to enhance the number of the SMC members from 5 to 11, which include the Head Master/Mistress and one teacher, two students, UC Councilor, five parents and one adopter of a student, who volunteers to bear the education expenses of one or more poor students. He wrote these orders in the form of an official notification addressed to the Tehsil Education Officer (TEO), Hala. The TEO restructured the SMCs of all public schools in the UC. Interestingly, a number of LSO and VO leaders

have become member of the SMCs. They are expecting that these reforms will bring visible changes in the quality of education by ensuring regular attendance of teachers and proper utilisation of school funds.

Social Accountability of Lady Medical Officer

The Taluka Government Hospital is the only major health facility for the people of UC Bhanoth. The Lady Medical Officer of the Hospital was not giving proper treatments to the poor community members, as she was running her private clinic and wanted them to come to her clinic. In her private clinic, she used to accept medicines and surgical supplies bought from two specific medical stores only because she had fixed her commission with them. This was an open secret, but nobody dared to complain against her as she belonged to an influential family. However, after the social mobilisation process, the women of the village became aware of their rights and gained the necessary confidence to speak up. The LSO gave the poor women of the UC a voice and platform to put forth their issues. The women representatives of the LSO, who were part of the Joint Development Committee, complained against the Medical Officer to the Assistant Commissioner during the Taluka JDC meeting. The AC immediately transferred her from the Taluka Hospital and assigned a new Lady Medical Officer, who has been reported to be performing her duties properly, and the villagers are extremely satisfied.

Construction of Link Road

There were two deep gorges, near the stream at the western end of village Mirnpur. Due to these gorges, people were unable to cross the stream to go out and get into the village, therefore, they had to take a very long route, which took a lot of time and cost more as well. After formation of the LSO, the members of the organisation decided to first and foremost develop a road to provide them with access to other villages and towns. They decided to fill in the gorges with mud and make a link road over it on self-help basis. They collected donations from the well-off families of the village, while the poor members contributed in form of free labour. They were able to obtain a tractor trolley from a local farmer, free of cost, to transport mud for levelling the gorges. The community members constructed a short link road in a matter of days, which provided them access outside of the village, and drastically reduced the travel time and cost of over 100 households.



Women LSO Leader supervising the link road construction work



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